
October 1977, Number 57



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The Delius Society
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The Delius Society
Journal

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Cover Illustration

F Delius by Dawn Redwood (after Kapp)

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EDITORIAL

Christmas is coming, and even though your geese may not be getting very fat, I feel sure that the pile of past issues of *The Delius Society Journal* on your shelf is. What better Christmas present, then, to request than having these back-numbers bound in a single volume? One of our recently-joined members, Mr. Paul Delrue, is a hand bookbinder, one of the very few practising this craft in the British Isles, and he has very kindly offered to bind Journals from number 41 onwards for the special inclusive price of £6.50. His address is: Bryn Celyn, Chapel Street, Caerwys, Nr. Mold, Clwyd. Overseas members should state whether they wish the finished article sent by air or surface mail, and add postage accordingly. Our more recent members may like to know that back-numbers of the Journal are available as follows:

Nos. 42 and 44-46 inclusive 40p per copy.
Nos. 50 onwards 50p per copy.

Postage is extra. It is regretted that copies are no longer available of nos. 41, 43, 47, 48, 49, and 55; however, if any member has any of these and does not wish to keep them, I would be very pleased to receive them to pass on to others. (Mr. Delrue is himself wanting these issues).

* * *

I have no doubt that the film *Bird's Eye View*, shown on BBC-2 on 19th August, in which Sir John Betjeman conducted an aerial tour of the seaside towns of southern England, had been shown before. Nevertheless, it was pleasant, if predictable, to hear *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* forming the background music at more than one point. This film included, incidentally, some shots of the Minack Theatre, Cornwall, where *Hassan* was performed a week or two later, and which is reported elsewhere in this issue. More enterprising on the part of the BBC was a feature shown to younger viewers on one of their Playschool programmes in mid-June. Tracing the life-cycle of the horse-chestnut tree it was backed, my family tell me, by *In a Summer Garden*. The first televised Prom. of the season happily contained the only Delius item this year, *In a Summer Garden*, conducted by Sir Charles Groves. During the spoken preamble some shots of the garden to-day were shown, and these were kindly supplied by two of our lady members, Miss Estelle Palmley and Miss Ruth How. The performance, which was extremely well received by the audience, had many good points, particularly, I thought, the viola melody and its woodwind accompaniment.

* * *

With this issue of the *Journal*, members receive a "bonus" in the form of the libretto of Delius's early opera *The Magic Fountain*. The fortunate not-so-few who were privileged to be present at the première recording of this work last July under Norman del Mar will already be looking forward to the broadcast, which is scheduled for Sunday, 20th

November. All members will appreciate the generosity of the Delius Trust in making copies of the libretto available in advance of this exceptionally important event. In addition, Robert Threlfall will give an illustrated talk about the opera in place of the Quilter Centenary programme originally scheduled for 24th November. Please note the new date: Friday, 18th November at 7.30p.m. in Holborn Public Library.

* * *

The January 1978 *Journal* will be a special issue devoted to Bradford, where plans are afoot to build a new concert hall, to be named *The Delius Centre*.

SONATA for STRING ORCHESTRA

A note on Eric Fenby's recent transcription, with some thoughts on the original Quartet version.

The latest of Eric Fenby's arrangements of the music of Frederick Delius is a transcription for string orchestra of the String Quartet of 1916. Since my updated listing was published in *Composer* no. 57 on the occasion of Mr. Fenby's "coming-of-age" in 1976, he had already completed arrangements for flute and string orchestra (or flute and piano) of the *Air and Dance* and of *La Calinda*, at the instigation of James Galway. The idea then occurred to some of us that Mr. Fenby should be asked to consider completing his rearrangement of the String Quartet as a work for string orchestra. This had already been commenced in 1963 (at Sir John Barbirolli's suggestion) with a beautiful and flexible interpretation of the third movement ("Late Swallows"), wherein divided strings and solo lines both lightened the original texture and added greater variety of tone colour. On being approached, Mr. Fenby readily agreed with this proposal and the new MS score of the remaining three movements was completed earlier this year.

Rarely, it seems, has anyone been found to praise Delius's most extended essay in chamber music, his String Quartet; yet I well recall one performance when a friend, unfamiliar with Delius's music as a whole, remarked to me how the very first bars of the work spoke at once with a new voice. The unyielding texture of parts of the original work, especially in the first and last movements (so much so for example, that all four players have to stop playing simultaneously in order to turn their pages at the big *pizzicato* chord on page 12!), has made it unpopular with many string players: hence it is usually left to the less "glossy" ensembles — a notable exception being the Gabrieli quartet's recent broadcast. Hence too, the second movement has often sounded scratchy and hurried, the third lacking in the poetry with which it is suffused. As for the fourth, dismissed by Prof. Hutchings as an "otiose and unworthy finale", this is yet a kaleidoscopic marvel of the changing

harmonies underlying a simple 2-plus-2 bar thematic fragment. Recently, in 1972, Sir William Walton himself arranged his own splendid string quartet of 1947 — a far finer quartet than Delius's, of course, — as a Sonata for Strings. In this form, it is already enjoying a new lease of life with wider ensembles. The variety of texture and dynamics introduced by Eric Fenby in his masterly similar transcription of Delius's quartet, spacing the characteristic harmony of this work of the Composer's maturity to excellent effect, should well have a similar result in this case in turn.

The first performance of Delius's String Quartet took place on 17th November, 1916 in London, and it appears from the review in the *Musical Times* (Dec. 1916, p. 554) and other sources that the present second movement played no part in the original scheme and that the *Late Swallows* movement was then considerably shorter than the form in which we know it. Philip Heseltine later referred to this first performance in a letter to the composer on 15th May, 1918, saying "..... the *String Quartet* was raped by that lecherous party of players in London." It should perhaps be recorded that this "party" concerned consisted of none other than Albert Sammons, H. Wynn Reeves, Waldo Warner and C. Warwick Evans — surely as distinguished a team as could then have been assembled in England! Before this, Delius had written to Heseltine on 27th. May, 1917 to say "..... I have rewritten my string quartet and added a scherzo — I heard it in Paris — there was a little too much double-stopping — I think it is now good." Another London performance followed, on 1st. February, 1919, in this revised form: this date is usually quoted as that of the first performance. (I am indebted to the indefatigable Stephen Lloyd for much of the information given in this paragraph).

Unfortunately I have been unable to examine the MSS of either the original (dated "Greiz-sur-Loing 1916") or the revised version of this work, but a number of very interesting fragments have also survived. Four pages of a pencilled autograph draft score, representing approximately the last six pages of the first movement as printed, are to be found in the Grainger Museum, Melbourne, Australia; a similar page (doubtless from the same draft), corresponding to part of the last two pages of the whole work, is now bound into Vol. 39 of the Delius Trust Archive. A page of the autograph fair copy of the original version of *Late Swallows* was reproduced in *Tempo* years ago (and will reappear in my own forthcoming *Catalogue of the Compositions of Frederick Delius*). All these MSS, on being set beside the published score, reveal the thinning of texture therein mentioned in Delius's letter above. It should be mentioned that an autograph MS short-score draft of the opening pages only of *Late Swallows* is also to be found in the Grainger Museum. The interpolated second movement is evidently based on the theme of the corresponding section of Delius's earliest string quartet of 1888, as was mentioned by Mr. Fenby in his sleeve-note to a recording of the published Quartet. (Lionel Carley and I

have taken care that a facsimile of the surviving page of this early work which reveals this "transplant" is reproduced in our *Delius: a life in Pictures*). Like most of Delius's works issued by Augeners during the early 1920s, the score (and, to a lesser degree, the separate parts) contains a fair sprinkling of misprints, missing accidentals, etc., partly due, no doubt to the composer's increasing incapacity. Proof sheets of score and parts corrected by Jelka Delius are to be found in the British Library, but these do not settle all such queries.

I have already referred elsewhere to that magical passage at the heart of the slow movement, where memories of *Florida*, *Koanga* and *The Magic Fountain* crowd upon the composer; a passage whose poetry is enhanced in the wider tonal spectrum of the arrangement. Other special felicities of the new version are to be found in the many "divisi" passages to add contrast; likewise the antiphonal use of a solo quartet, as also the judiciously-added double-bass part. Several extra dynamics, splitting of double-stops between two players and occasional enharmonic simplification of the notation testify to the arranger's vast practical experience in such matters. It is now to be hoped that this latest labour of love by our President, aimed in his usual selfless way at broadening even more the appeal of Delius's music, may find ready and wide acceptance among our many excellent string orchestras. The Introduction and Allegro of Elgar, Vaughan Williams' Tallis Fantasia, Bliss's Music for Strings, Britten's Frank Bridge variations: this is to name but a few of the glories of native works for string ensemble. To these, a disc consisting of Walton's Sonata for Strings backed by the "new" eponymous Delius work must form a most valuable supplement. Who shall be the first to give it to us?

Scores and parts of the Delius *Sonata for String Orchestra*, arranged from the String Quartet original by Eric Fenby, are available on hire from the publishers, Stainer & Bell Ltd., 82 High Road, London N2 9PW, to whom all enquiries should be addressed.

A STUDENTS' "APPALACHIA"

Architecturally, the Concert Hall at the Royal College of Music resembles nothing so much as one of London's smaller railway termini. Unfortunately the resemblance is not confined to the shape of the building: the acoustics are remarkably similar. The sound of the orchestra approaches the listener with all the delicacy of an express train charging the buffers: one does not so much hear the music as receive it between the eyes. Consequently any remarks about the performance of *Appalachia* given on 7th July by the College's First Orchestra under the direction of Norman Del Mar must be read with this fact in mind.

The performance as a whole provided a further argument in favour of the theory that with Delius's music it is not the details that matter, it is the effect of the composition as a whole. And it was just this effect that seemed to be missing. One was left with the impression that what one had heard was good in parts but did not somehow quite come off.

Let it be said at once that the first horn had an off day. It was a warm evening and this may have had some effect on his control, but even so there were far too many fluffs; one began to view his entries with some apprehension. No doubt on another occasion this would not have occurred; as it was it did not make for a receptive attitude. One felt also that Norman Del Mar took the initial entry of the theme just that little bit too fast; one had the impression of two in a bar rather than the common time *Andante* specified in the score. Probably the sections that came off best were the march and the choral variations.

Oddly enough the acoustic of the hall was more favourable to the chorus than it was to the orchestra, and with their entry for the unaccompanied section one realised that a beautiful sound was something that had no more resemblance to the singing of negro slaves than has any other English chorus. The baritone's voice rang out splendidly and if the sopranos did not quite get the top Cs on "scented" they nearly did so.

The unwillingness of the woodwind to play *pianissimo* was not confined to this orchestra; it is exceptional to hear a really quiet woodwind passage from most professionals. One sometimes wonders why composers bother to mark any woodwind parts "*pp*".

This all sounds most ungrateful. There are few enough performances of *Appalachia* for one to look any gift horse entirely in the mouth. Let us therefore give all credit to the performers for what they did do and to that dedicated Delian, Norman Del Mar, for encouraging — probably initiating — a performance of one of Delius's major works.

The remainder of the programme consisted of Weber's *Abu Hassan* Overture conducted by a student and Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto played by Kathryn Stott. This young lady is only what the Irish might call a slip of a girl, but what a formidable technique she commands! And she contrives to sit at the piano and play this highly taxing work without any throwing about of the body, head-tossing, eye-rolling or other of the distracting mannerisms with which the televising of pianists has made us all too familiar. She gave a stunning performance and received a well-deserved ovation.

The other item in the programme was the *Drei Orchesterstücke*, op 6 of Berg, a work with which your representatives were not familiar. This appeared to utilise every instrumental student at the College: seldom can so many have been gathered together at one time, and

one could see at a glance why performances of this work are so few; fancy having to pay all those musicians! Needless to say, this vast collection of young people had a grand time and produced a simply prodigious noise. The climax came when in the final movement labelled *Marsch* one of their number armed himself with a coke hammer and proceeded to attempt the destruction of the platform. We are happy to report that he was unsuccessful.

Gilbert Parfitt.

DELIUS'S SECOND BURIAL

by Peter Vernon

Most Delians will know that Delius is buried in Limpsfield churchyard, Surrey. He is thought never to have visited the village, nor to have had any association with it. His re-interment there is said to have been at the instigation of the Harrison sisters (Beatrice and Mary) who were aware that in his last years he had expressed the wish to be buried in the English countryside.

A hurried, and necessarily incomplete, inquiry has brought to light some interesting information. Still living in the district is Mr. Frank Bunn, who in his teens played the organ at St. Peter's Church, Limpsfield. He and Mrs. Ferguson (aged 88 and still living in Limpsfield) were instrumental in persuading the Harrison sisters to hold a concert in the church (at which no music by Delius was played). There was one rehearsal only, which lasted until 11 p.m. The rector of the day, wondering why his church lights were still on, looked in to investigate. He was there and then buttonholed by the Harrison sisters, and coerced into agreeing to the reburial of Delius in Limpsfield.

Delius's body was brought up from Dover (from the cross-channel steamer) in the back of a van on Saturday, 25th May 1935, by Brasiers, the local undertakers. The re-interment took place that same night in secrecy, with an attendant party consisting only of Eric Fenby, two Harrison sisters (May and Margaret, not Beatrice), the rector, the parish clerk, and Frank Bunn. However, Fleet Street got wind of it, and a number of journalists were concealed behind bushes in the churchyard. At regular intervals the light from their flash-bulbs added stark contrast to that of the flickering hurricane lamps at either end of the grave. The following afternoon (Sunday), a concert of Delius's music was held in the church, at which Beecham, Vaughan Williams, Fenby and many other leading musicians were present. Beecham delivered an oration of some twenty minutes; this alone was recorded by a BBC van parked outside the church.

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A very few days later, Jelka Delius died and was buried in the same grave.

It has not been possible so far to find out who purchased the grave and tombstone, and who was responsible for the inscription on the stone (the second and third forenames of Delius are wrongly transposed). The firm of Brasiers some years ago sold out to the present undertakers, Ebbutts, and past records are not available. One may guess that the Harrison sisters, who lived in the neighbouring town of Oxted, had a hand in the matter. The grave is maintained by the Parochial Church Council, to which the Delius Society makes an annual donation.

HOW TO FIND DELIUS'S GRAVE

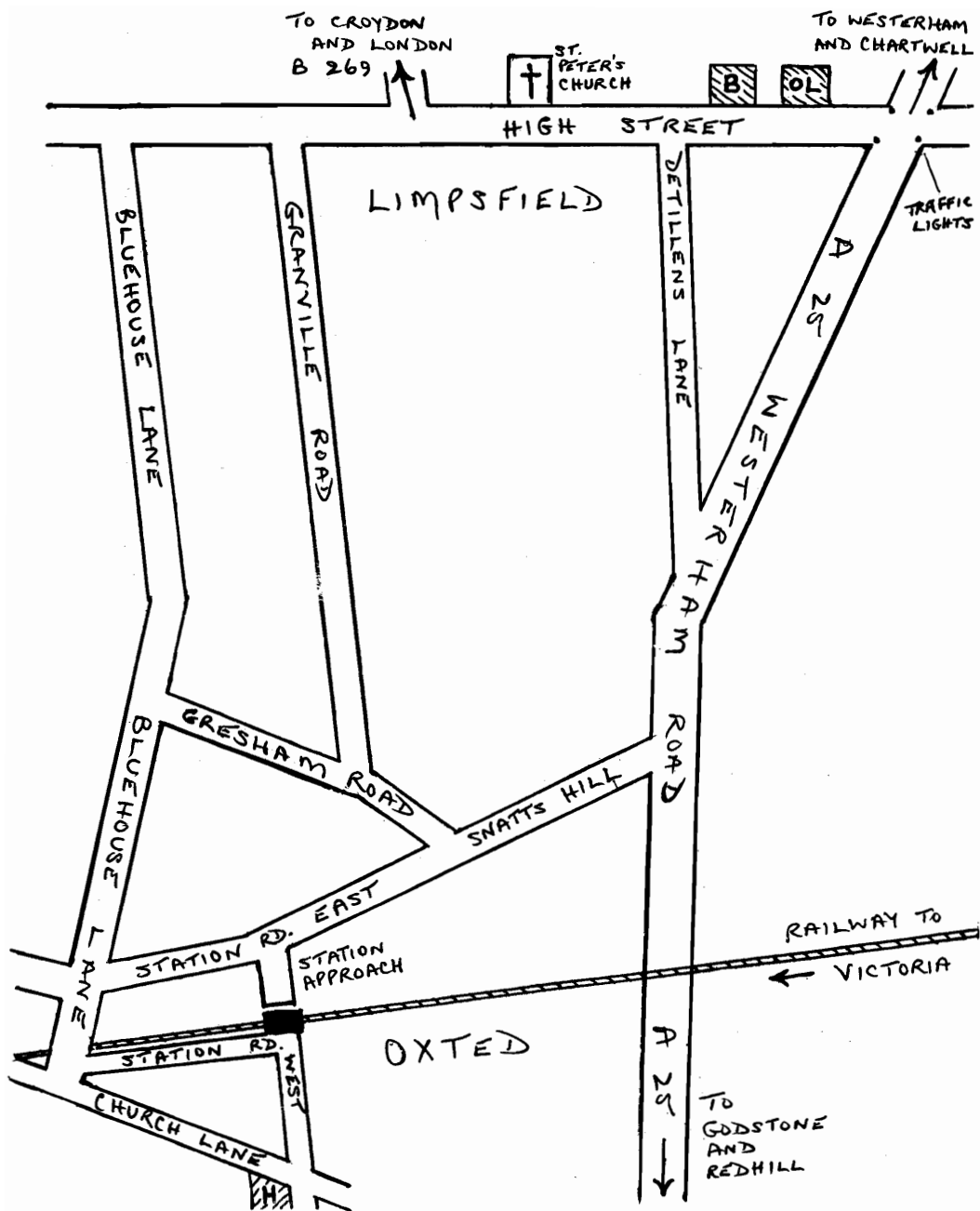
Approach St. Peter's church via the lychgate which leads towards the main (south) door. Take the path which skirts round the west end of the church, to a point close to the north door. Turn left here, and walk about forty paces along this new path. By looking left, the grave can be seen, three rows deep. The stone is an upright granite slab, with a surrounding granite kerb.

Overleaf is a sketch map of Oxted and Limpsfield. Trains to Oxted Station leave London Victoria approximately hourly, mostly at 9 minutes past the hour. The distance from the station to Limpsfield church is one mile (via Station Road East, Gresham Rd., Granville Rd. and High Street). Bus routes 464 and 410 connect the church with the station but each operates only once an hour. Places of refreshment are the Hoskins Arms Hotel, Oxted, (marked H), the Bull Inn, Limpsfield, (marked B), and the Old Lodge Restaurant, Limpsfield, (marked OL). (it was at the first of these that many members of the Society met before Eric Fenby's talk last May.)

THE REINTERMENT: A PERSONAL MEMORY

by Norman Cameron.

Sunday, May 26th, 1935 was a perfect spring day, and as those of us who had come down from London walked from Limpsfield station, the air was full of the country sounds and scents that Delius had loved. Approaching St. Peter's Church, we were surprised and touched to see the crowds thronging the churchyard: hundreds, unable to gain admission to the church, in every kind of costume from hiking shorts and open-necked shirts to formal Sunday best, patiently waiting in silence to pay their last respects. The church itself, designed for a congregation of 450, was packed to the doors and as we edged into our allotted seats we glimpsed many well-known faces: Albert Sammons and Lionel Tertis, John Coates, Roy Henderson and George Baker,



Herbert Howells, Balfour Gardiner, John Barbirolli, May Harrison, Evelyn Howard-Jones and Dr. Vaughan Williams among them, while Sir Thomas Beecham and 24 players from his London Philharmonic Orchestra were stationed on the north side of the chancel. Sadly absent was Mrs. Delius, seriously ill in a Kensington nursing home.

The Rector, the Reverend Charles Steer, conducted the brief ceremony, reading passages from the Burial Service, a lesson from 2 Corinthians and prayers in which the congregation joined. Then at a signal from Sir Thomas, the mysterious opening chords of *Summer Night on the River* floated on the still air, followed by the serenade from *Hassan* and the *Elegy* for 'Cello (Anthony Pini with Paul Beard conducting) and Orchestra and, doubly poignant in its tender loveliness and wistful intimations of mortality, *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*.

Then out into the warm sunshine to the graveside, where Delius's coffin had been laid the previous evening. It only remained for the Rector to perform the Committal rites and for Sir Thomas to pay his final tribute in the famous oration that has become part of the Beecham legend. The grave dignity of his bearing was as impressive as the heartfelt conviction of his closing words :

"I say farewell to his mortal remains in no spirit of sorrow or regret. The most precious part of this man is the immortal part — his spirit as revealed in his work: and in whatever sphere that spirit is I would like our greetings to pass beyond the confines of this earthly sphere and let him know that we are here not in a spirit of vain regret but rather in a spirit of rejoicing that his work is with us and will remain with us for evermore."

And nearly half a century later, those words perfectly epitomise my own heartwarming memories of that soft May afternoon.
Editor's Postscript:

"The Surrey Mirror" reported a complete list of mourners. In addition to those already named these included: Eric Fenby, May and Beatrice Harrison, Mrs. Norman O'Neill, Cecil Gray, Sir William and Lady Rothenstein, Gertrude Lady Worthington Evans, Mrs. Buest (representing Dr. Adrian Boult and the BBC Music Department, Leon Goossens and Norman Cameron. Floral tributes were sent by Miss Peggy Delius; "In loving and everlasting gratitude from May, Beatrice (Baba), Margaret and little Monica Harrison"; Eric; Cecily Arnold and Eric Johnson; Proms Circle; the BBC; the Royal Philharmonic Society; and others. A description of the funeral by Mr. H. L. Morrow was included in that evening's BBC news broadcast.

THE LEAVING OF LIVERPOOL

or

FAREWELL, SIR CHARLES.

AN APPRECIATION

Gordon Lovgreen

It was entirely appropriate that, for his farewell concert as Musical Director of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra at the Philharmonic Hall, on August 5th, Sir Charles Groves should choose an all-English programme, consisting of *Brigg Fair*, the *Enigma Variations* and, in between these two works, the first performance of the third piano concerto of the Liverpool-born composer, John McCabe. (1) The choice of *Brigg Fair* was trebly appropriate, for not only did it reflect the conductor's predilection for the music of Delius; in addition, the date of the concert made it particularly apt, (for was it not "on the fift' of August"...?) and of course, the work was given its first performance in Liverpool in 1908, and is well-loved by Merseyside audiences. (2) Despite the heat generated by the TV lighting, and some unwelcome and obtrusive off-stage bumps, which disturbed the quieter moments of Delius's rhapsody, it was a highly enjoyable concert. If the emotion of the occasion seemed to some critics to have taken the edge off the playing at times, to be frank I did not notice this myself. Orchestra and conductor appeared to me to be in exceptionally good form all through and, together with the soloist, Ilan Rogoff, gave a stunning performance of the concerto. It was a joyous and festal occasion, but also a rather sad one, for it was the end of an era, and those of us on Merseyside who love British music must wonder not only whether we shall in coming years be as lavishly provided for as we have been over the last fourteen, but also whether, given the timid attitude of London concert promoters, Liverpool's loss will necessarily turn out to be London's gain, outside the Coliseum.

Sir Charles, or Charles Groves as he was in those days, gave his first concert in Liverpool on Good Friday, 1946, when he conducted *The Dream of Gerontius*. On looking through my collection of concert programmes, I find that I attended this concert, but I have to admit that I can remember nothing about it. The critics were complimentary. "This performance was in many ways moving," wrote A. K. Holland. "Mr. Groves takes a rather exciting and dramatic view of the work..... one felt that there was a genuine conception behind it. The choir was inspired to give one of its best performances." The "Echo" critic wrote of Mr. Groves' "loving attention to detail" in handling the orchestral writing, and concluded: "the performance was impressive." It is interesting to note that here, already, our attention is drawn to two gifts which, for me at least, have made Sir Charles's interpretations of Delius so effective — his skill in handling large forces, including chorus,



*Sir Thomas Beecham making his Oration on Sunday, 26th May 1935.
Photograph by Norman Cameron.*

FREDERICK ALBERT THEODORE
DELIUS.

BORN 29TH JANUARY 1862.

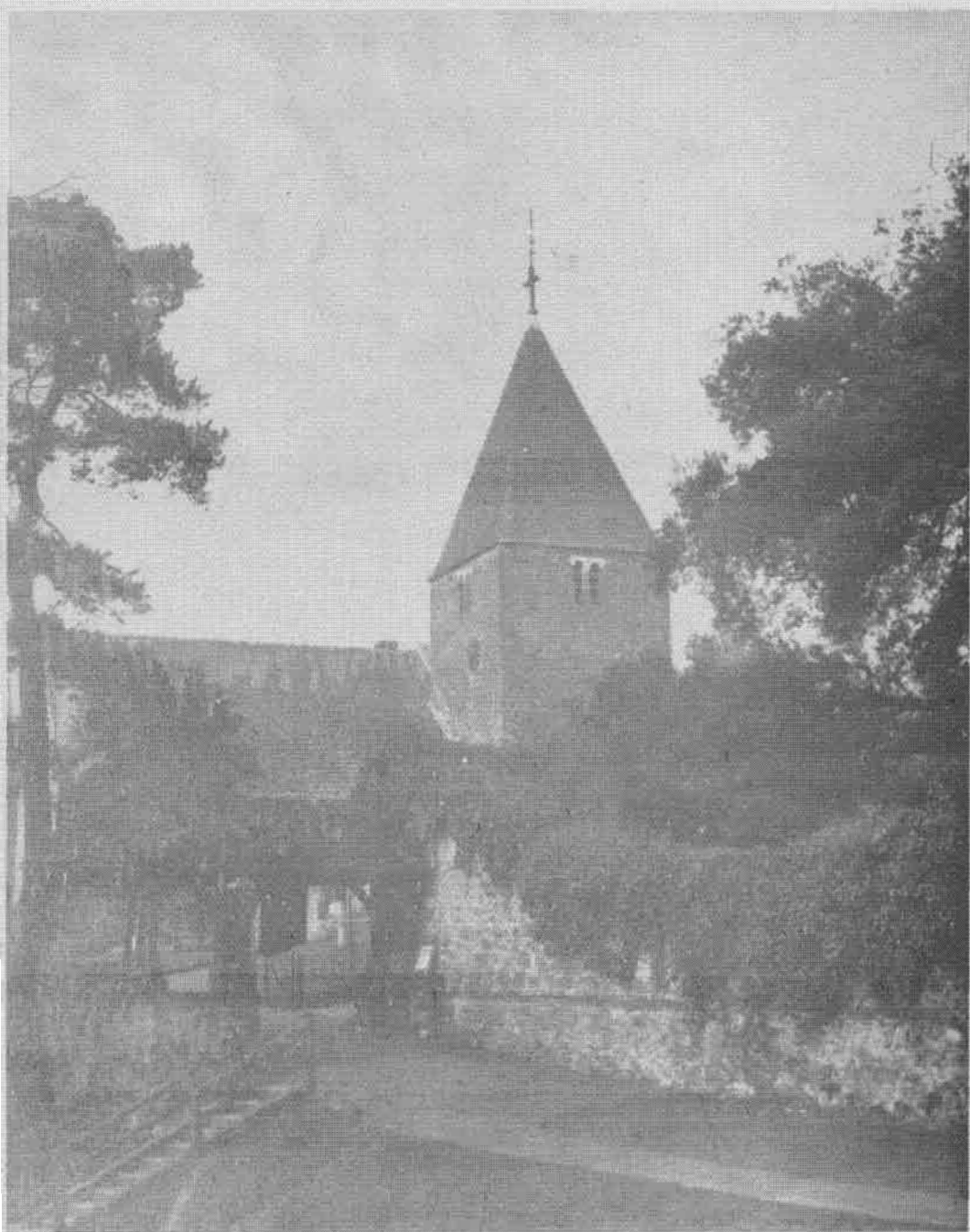
DIED 10TH JUNE 1934.

JELKA DELIUS.

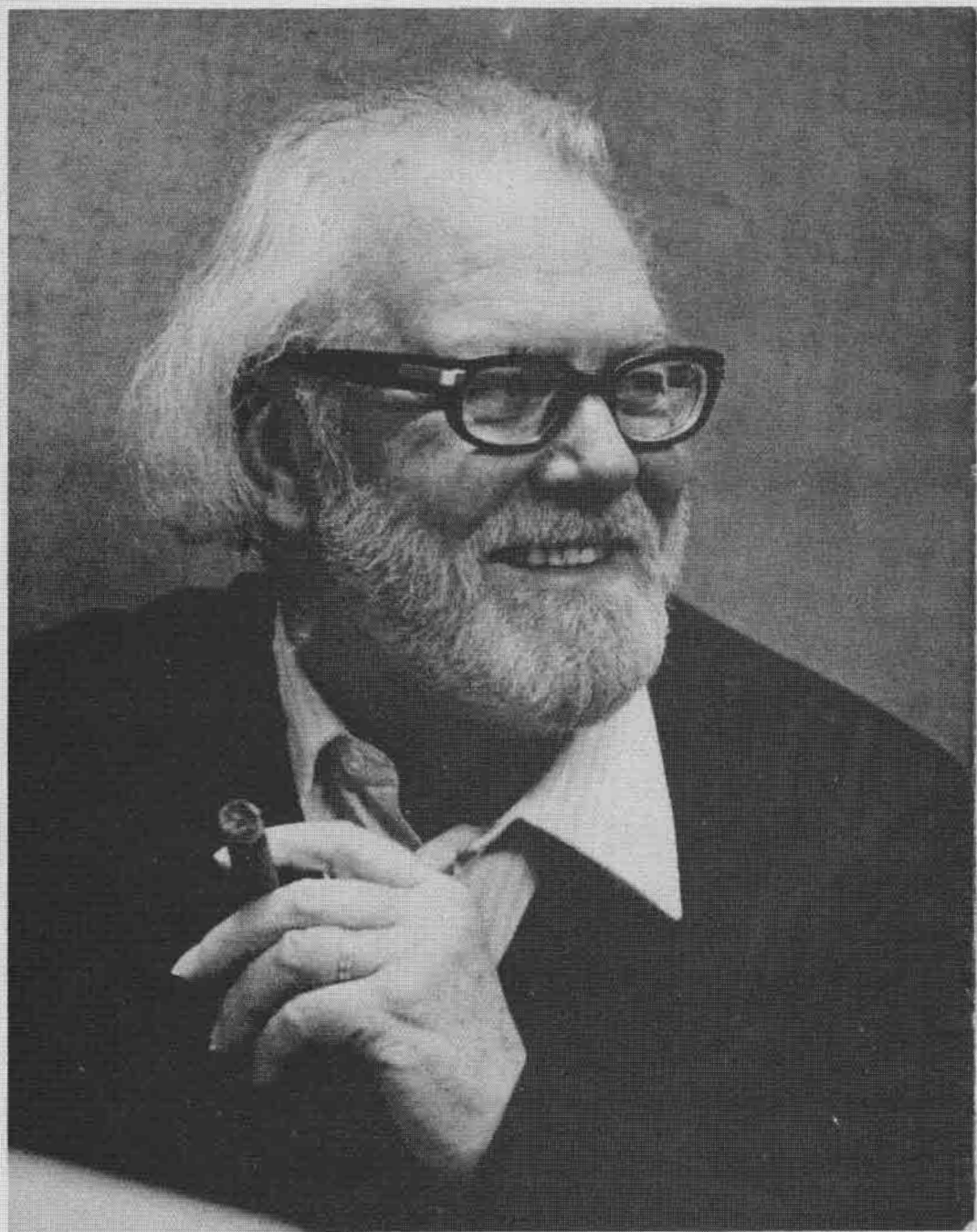
BORN 26TH DECEMBER 1872.

DIED 24TH MAY 1935.

FREDERICK ALBERT THEODORE
DELIUS.
BORN 29TH JANUARY 1862.
DIED 10TH JUNE 1934.



*Delius's Grave and St. Peter's Church, Limpsfield, Surrey.
Photographs by Geoffrey G. Hoare.*



Sir Charles Groves.

Photograph by Clive Barda, Courtesy of E.M.I.

coupled with his care for individual parts; though I do not think the latter is always revealed in his recordings. A recent article in *The Gramophone* has suggested that, excellent as the Philharmonic Hall is for public concerts, it does have its problems when recordings are being made there. (3)

Between 1946 and his appointment as Musical Director in 1963, Sir Charles conducted a score or so of concerts in Liverpool, mostly in the late 40s, when he was conductor of the BBC Northern Orchestra, and in the early 60s, after he had left Bournemouth and just prior to his appointment. Apart from *Brigg Fair*, the only composition of Delius which he conducted in Liverpool during this period was the early *Summer Evening*, given by the BBC Northern Orchestra in October, 1951 (4), and although, among the seventy or so works performed under his baton at Liverpool during these years were Moeran's Symphony, Britten's Violin Concerto (twice) and Piano Concerto, Vaughan Williams' Fifth Symphony and Berkeley's Sinfonietta, the repertoire of these concerts gave little indication of the extent of Sir Charles's commitment to British music.

Fully to appreciate this commitment, one needs to consider the following statistics. The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society's season consists of three main series of orchestral concerts, lasting from September until early May. These are the subscription series of sixteen concerts, given once a fortnight on Tuesday evenings, the week-end series of sixteen concerts, also fortnightly, usually on Saturday evenings, and the "Industrial Concerts", a series of nine concerts, one a month, each given three times on the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings of one week, and for which a standard price is charged for all tickets, which are distributed through commercial, industrial and educational establishments. These last are by no means restricted to "popular" music — concerts in recent years have included *Pierrot Lunaire* and works by Berio, Lutoslawski and Ives. In addition, there are, at Christmas, carol concerts, performances of *Messiah* and special Family concerts, and between five and ten concerts in the summer. If we count the industrial series as separate concerts (i.e., as twenty-seven concerts per season, and not nine), this means a total of seventy-plus concerts a season. Thus, in Sir Charles's fourteen years with the RLPS, there have been over one thousand orchestral performances promoted by the Society, of which he has conducted just under fifty per cent, or nearly five hundred.

In these five hundred concerts, over sixteen hundred performances have been given of more than six hundred and fifty works by one hundred and sixty-odd composers. Of these, no fewer than three hundred and fifty-nine performances have been of British music — some two hundred compositions by over fifty composers, about twenty of whom are under fifty years of age. LONDON CONCERT PROMOTERS MIGHT CARE TO NOTE THAT ONLY MOZART

(THIRTY-NINE WORKS) AND BEETHOVEN (TWENTY-NINE) HAVE HAD MORE INDIVIDUAL WORKS PERFORMED UNDER SIR CHARLES'S BATON AT LIVERPOOL THAN DELIUS (TWENTY-ONE), AND THAT IN TERMS OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES, DELIUS COMES SEVENTH IN THE LIST (WITH FORTY-EIGHT PERFORMANCES), IMMEDIATELY AFTER ELGAR AND HANDEL (FIFTY-FOUR EACH, BUT IN HANDEL'S CASE, THESE INCLUDE THIRTY-THREE PERFORMANCES OF MESSIAH!) (5) Moreover Britten (forty-one performances of fifteen works) and Vaughan Williams (thirty-nine of twenty) are well up the list in ninth and eleventh positions. *Delius Society Journal* readers will know from a previous article (6) that the Delius works performed have by no means been confined to the usual minor compositions — on the contrary, sixteen of the twenty-one works played have been large-scale works, ranging from *Life's Dance* and *In a Summer Garden* to *A Mass of Life*, and including six big choral works and two concertos. In the same way, Vaughan Williams has been represented by the first seven of his nine symphonies, *Job*, *Flos Campi*, *Sancta Civitas*, *Hodie* and the Oboe Concerto, as well as by his more popular shorter works, Walton by his two symphonies, three concertos, *Belshazzar's Feast* and the *Hindemith Variations*. Britten by all four Symphonies, the Piano Concerto, *A War Requiem* (three separate performances), Tippett by his First and Third Symphonies, Piano Concerto and *A Child of Our Time*. Of Holst, less well-favoured, we have nevertheless heard, apart from *The Planets*, *The Hymn of Jesus*, the Fugal Concerto, the *Lyric Movement* for viola and orchestra and the *Prelude and Scherzo: Hammersmith*.

As indicated, Sir Charles has not confined his interest to the older British composers, but has performed works by many younger ones, including several Liverpool-born composers, such as Malcolm Lipkin and Edwin Roxburgh, encouraging them with first performances of works, some of them commissioned by the RLPS. Nor has his advocacy of twentieth-century music been restricted to British compositions. Amongst the four-score composers born after 1880 whose works have been performed, nearly half are not British, and Henze, Stockhausen, Messiaen, Berio, Lutoslawski, Gerhard and Ginastera, to name but a few, have had major works performed in Liverpool. Recently Sir Charles initiated a commemorative cycle of performances of all the Shostakovich symphonies, of which he himself has conducted four, together with the recent Michelangelo song-cycle. He is also the first English conductor to have conducted all ten Mahler symphonies with his own orchestra. He has conducted six of the seven Sibelius symphonies, numerous major works by Prokofiev, Rachmaninov, Stravinsky, Strauss, given complete concert performances of *Pelléas and Mélisande* and *Bluebeard's Castle* — so one could go on, with equally long lists of works by eighteenth and nineteenth century composers. To take just one, of Berlioz, he has given us not only the usual overtures and the *Symphonie Fantastique*, but also *Romeo and Juliet*, *Harold in Italy*,

The Damnation of Faust, Te Deum, The Childhood of Christ and Nuits d'été. If there are gaps — and there are precious few of any significance — it has to be borne in mind that Sir Charles has only conducted one half of the total concerts given, and has not felt obliged to duplicate performances of works which other conductors, who have made a speciality of interpreting certain composers, have already given. Nevertheless the great classics — Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, not to mention Tchaikovsky — have all been fully represented.

If there have been occasional signs of strain and tiredness, these have been far outweighed by the many memorable performances. For me the outstanding occasion was undoubtedly *A Mass of Life*, with Thomas Hemsley as baritone soloist, on January 20th, 1970, a superb performance, the best I've heard since Beecham, and one which I shall always regret was not captured permanently on records, good as is the LPO performance. In fact Sir Charles has shown himself a masterly director of large forces and complex scores, and has conducted outstanding performances not only of Delius, the Elgar oratorios and Britten's *A War Requiem*, but also of Mahler's Eighth, (not usually a favourite composer of mine, but this June's performance, heard over local radio, almost converted me) and Messiaen's *Turangalila Symphony* as well as older masterpieces — Bach's *Passions* and *Mass*, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* and *Choral Symphony*, the Berlioz works mentioned above, Liszt's *Faust Symphony*, and so on. It is, by any standard, an impressive record and Liverpool concertgoers, well aware of the debt owed to him gave him an affectionate and heartwarming four-minute standing ovation at the end of his farewell concert.

There is space to mention only briefly Sir Charles's other activities and achievements during the last fourteen years with the RLPO. They have broadcast frequently. As well as live concerts from Liverpool, there have been recorded concerts, including the 1973 Delius birthday concert, when *Over the Hills and Far Away*, a work not heard at Liverpool, was performed, and concerts from other cities, e.g., from York in 1973 (*Sea Drift* and *The Song of the High Hills*, another work not heard at Liverpool) and from the Proms. In addition the RLPO has played regularly throughout the country and has made several tours in Europe, and although I have no full record of these, I have cuttings about performances of *North Country Sketches* in Scotland, and *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* in Holland and Switzerland. Finally there have been commercial recordings, including the three Delius records, and the "completed" *Unfinished Symphony* of Schubert.

Of course, Sir Charles has conducted other orchestras during these years, and his recordings of *A Mass of Life* and *Koanga* have been justly praised. For me, his *North Country Sketches*, *Life's Dance* and *A Song of Summer* is the best of recent records of Delius's music.

This is not, perhaps, the occasion for controversy, but I feel that I must record that I have been saddened occasionally by the cool reception accorded to Sir Charles Groves in certain Delius Society circles. As one who has enjoyed, indeed revelled in, the live performances of Delius's large-scale works which we have been privileged to hear in Liverpool over the last fourteen years, has witnessed the growing appreciation of and affection for his music and has heard the warm applause of large audiences, containing a high proportion of young people, I am a little taken aback at the condescending attitude and critical nit-picking which I have come across from time to time. I yield to nobody in my admiration for Sir Thomas Beecham, the greatest of Delius's interpreters, at least in pre-war years, and I do not always see eye to eye with Sir Charles Groves's interpretations on points of detail - probably because I am so wedded to the pre-war Beecham versions. Nevertheless, on more than one occasion, on consulting the score, I have found that Sir Charles was correct - he is the most scrupulous of conductors in his attention to composers' wishes. Part of the trouble is, no doubt, that Delius does appear to have left rather more than most composers to the discretion of the conductor. This may well be one reason why relatively few conductors are willing to perform his music - they just cannot be bothered to devote the necessary time to preparation. All the more credit, then, to Sir Charles and his orchestra for giving so many enjoyable performances, and for making recordings which, pace the Delius Society, have received glowing reviews in music journals both in England and America. To them and to their General Manager, Stephen Gray, to the Society, which has backed them up by approving their programmes (or rather by giving them a free hand to choose them) - and to the many discriminating music-lovers on Merseyside who, too, have manifested their approval by their attendance and their applause, we owe a great debt of gratitude.

I can think of no better way of ending this article than to quote the comments of the present chairman of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society, Councillor John Last, printed on the inside cover of the programme of the Farewell concert.

"It would be impossible to allow this occasion to pass without putting on record the gratitude of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society to Sir Charles Groves for his services during the past fourteen years. They have been years which have witnessed the orchestra's reputation growing from strength to strength and much of the credit for this must be accorded to Sir Charles. We shall miss him greatly, and look forward to welcoming him whenever he returns to Liverpool."

Au revoir, Sir Charles, and thank you.

NOTES.

(1) It is of interest that John McCabe has written perceptive and sympathetic reviews of recordings of Delius's music and that, in an interview earlier this year on BBC Radio Merseyside, he declared that, when composing *Chagall Windows*, he "went into training", to use his own phrase, by listening to a lot of Delius. He particularly mentioned the Liverpool record of *The Song of the High Hills*.

(2) *Brigg Fair* was played seven times in Liverpool in the 1940s, mainly under Sir Malcolm Sargent. It then fell out of the repertoire, but was conducted by Groves in 1961 and, since 1965, has been given eleven times, eight times under Groves. He included it in the programme of the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary concert of the RLPS in March, 1965. It is the Delius work which he has conducted most frequently in Liverpool.

(3) See *The Gramophone*, June 1977, Vol 55, No. 649, pages 23 & 24: *Recording Elgar's Choral Works* by Christopher Parker.

(4) He did, however, conduct *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* in concerts for schoolchildren given by the RLPO in 1962 or 1963. I attended one of these concerts at Birkenhead Technical College.

(5) The only other composers who have had more performances of their works conducted by Sir Charles are Beethoven (136), Mozart (91), Tchaikovsky (77), and Brahms (62).

(6) See *The Delius Society Journal* Number 43, 1974: *Delius in Liverpool* by A. G. Lovgreen.

DELIUS ON RECORD

By Lyndon Jenkins

SOME NEWER DELIUS RECORDINGS IN RETROSPECT

Since I last discussed new recordings there have been some very important issues in the orchestral, operatic and instrumental fields. While detailed considerations of all of them would take up too much *Journal* space (as well as proving wearisome) I want just to mention the most significant ones.

With *A Village Romeo and Juliet* and *Koanga* now available in respectable versions (and with the legendary Beecham version of the

former scheduled for re-issue) the choice of Delians has long fallen on *Fennimore and Gerda* as the next opera for attention. Most Delius commentators have objected to the tiny Gerda episode (of the opera's eleven 'pictures' it occupies the last two) because it provides an arbitrary happy ending of the most conventional kind. HMV's new records accommodate any listener with the same view by placing it considerably on the last side, so that those who choose to avoid it may do so; on the other hand the fresh and direct appeal of these closing scenes, and the fact that they include the two exquisite interludes known in the concert hall as the *Fennimore and Gerda* Intermezzo, may for some listeners provide welcome relief from the close and tense atmosphere of much that has gone before.

As so often with Delius the all-important factor is the orchestra, and it is good that this side of the endeavour is in the hands of one of our most experienced conductors, Meredith Davies. As well as drawing much exquisite playing, he is both careful and considerate to his singers, of whom two of the three principals are English (presumably the reason why the opera is not done in the original Danish which suits it best, but in Philip Heseltine's English version.) These are Robert Tear as Erik and Brian Rayner Cook as Niels, both good, but the latter contriving to sound more at home in both the atmosphere and style of the opera as well as making the music's vocal lines sound more natural. Elisabeth Söderström's diction seems hardly less English and she is very accurate: her Fennimore is certainly dramatic, chillingly so in the climactic scene where she rejects Niels and sends him away for ever. The recording is smooth and agreeable and reproduces well: balance between singers and orchestra is quite satisfactory, though there are undeniably moments when a little more orchestral presence would make an even greater effect. But the words remain audible always, which many people will count a distinct advantage. (HMV SLS991. 2 records).

North Country Sketches has now made its stereo debut at the hands of Sir Charles Groves. It is very well played by the RPO, while Sir Charles's reading strikes me as being the strongest and most individual of his recorded Delius interpretations so far; of the four movements, only the rather flat-footed *Dance* disappoints. *A Song of Summer* also features on the disc together with the first-ever recording of the early *Lebenstanz*; these are vigorously conducted, and caught in a recording which some may find rather too immediate; detail, however, is very clear. (HMV ASD3139).

HMV's more recent disc of the Violin and Double Concertos (ASD 3343), though starry, is less successful. Yehudi Menuhin adopts an over-expressive style in the Violin Concerto where unforced lyricism is what is really required; technically he is often uneasy, and the occasional glaringly-wrong note and poorly-phrased passage tend to suggest he is not yet fully inside the work. Parts of the central, slow

section, where a phrase here and there is undeniably affecting, have given me most pleasure. The orchestral playing under Meredith Davies is very backwardly balanced so that many essential woodwind phrases are not properly audible, and there are some incredibly bad 'joins' between violin and orchestra. If you think I exaggerate, listen at Nos. 8, 11, 24 and 27 in the Augener score; and there are others. The Double Concerto, with Paul Tortelier, is played much more forthrightly (which suits it) and on the whole is better executed, despite patches of poor synchronisation. I feel, though, that neither performance is definitive, and hardly eclipse earlier discs from less exalted performers.

This disappointment is handsomely atoned for by the simultaneous release of a fine collection of the shorter orchestral pieces by Norman del Mar and the Bournemouth Sinfonietta on an RCA disc (RL 25079). This is a most distinguished affair and I see that I am not the only one to take the view that it has some of the best Delius conducting since Beecham, while *Late Swallows* easily supersedes the only other recording, by Barbirolli. Just occasionally a more prosaic piece of phrasing, generally from the woodwind, stands out amongst so much that is irrevocably right; but nothing can spoil the overall achievement.

A major issue has been, of course, the World Records album conducted by Beecham (which incidentally I was pleased to see recently in stores in Paris). This has been mentioned elsewhere, so I will say no more than that it is essential to anyone who would reach a true understanding of what the best Delius style in singing and playing is all about. (SHB 32. 5 records).

NEWS FROM THE MIDLANDS

Musical events in the Midlands during the summer were enlivened by three important concerts all offering Delius's music. The revived Malvern Festival's opening programmes featured Yehudi Menuhin, mainly in Elgar (the Concerto, Sonata etc.) but, in his sonata recital on May 27, Delius and Vaughan Williams as well. The Delius was the Third Sonata, made specially interesting by the presence of Eric Fenby at the piano. Mr. Menuhin was on good technical form, but his reading was an idiosyncratic one and it needed all his accompanist's tact and understanding to preserve the essential momentum. As well, the passionate style adopted (which later so impressed in Elgar's Sonata) is by no means so suited to Delius, and it seemed to me that the Sonata wore this unwanted dimension somewhat uncomfortably.

Sir Charles Groves and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic put in a guest appearance during the CBSO Prom season on July 14 with a programme which included *In a Summer Garden*. Birmingham's Town Hall is a tricky one acoustically and it was evident that Sir Charles was having difficulty in getting its measure when he earlier allowed the big tune in Walton's Crown Imperial to be obliterated by the

percussion. The problem in the Delius was the weight of string sound which, if never actually overshadowing the crucial woodwind figures completely, nevertheless served to deaden the effect and mute the colours of that ravishingly colourful and sensuous tone picture.

June 25 was the occasion of the third of the Midland Branch's end-of-season concerts at Brian and Joan Dunn's home in Nottingham. This year instrumental music gave way to a vocal miscellany by the 18-strong Derwent Singers whose programme, under their conductor Barrie Simms, ranged from Moeran to Britten and included a handful of Delius's part-songs. Of special interest were the early *Frühlingsanbruch*, *Sonnenscheinlied*, and *Durch den Wald*, which had the benefit of an enthusiastic introduction by Robert Threlfall. These had obviously been well-studied and prepared and were given sensitive and stylish performances, as were *Midsummer Song* and *To be sung of a Summer Night on the Water*. Ideally, more space between audience and performers than is possible in the otherwise admirable concert room would have been an advantage, but this scarcely detracted from the overall achievement and interest in hearing these pieces, and the concert altogether made another outstanding event for the Midlands Branch.

Lyndon Jenkins.

* * *

Apart from Midlands Branch meetings there have been two notable Delius events recently.

The first took place at Morley Retreat and Conference House in Derbyshire where annual singing week-ends are organised by Catherine Baxter at which Choir enthusiasts spend a week-end rehearsing choral works and give a concert on Sunday afternoon. This year one of the works chosen was Delius's *Song of Sunset* in which member Marjorie Tapley was the soprano soloist with Jeremy Hagan (Baritone). The choir gave a creditable performance of a difficult work and the soloists were outstanding. The work was performed with piano accompaniment.

The other event was an orchestral concert on the 10th July at Lichfield by the Grosvenor Orchestra conducted by Lyndon Jenkins. Among the English works performed (including *Capriol Suite*, Britten's *Simple Symphony* and works by Ireland and Bridge) was Delius's *Air and Dance*. As might be expected from so discerning a Delian, this was a sensitive performance entirely free from the dragging and sagging which seems to dog so many Delius performances. Let us hope this may be the first of many Delius offerings.

R. B. Kitching.

BOOK REVIEW

Delius: A Life in Pictures by Lionel Carley and Robert Threlfall
To be published by Oxford University Press in November 1977.

95 pages, £6.95.

This is a book about which we have known, and to which we have eagerly looked forward, for the past few years. In many ways the result is a splendid production, particularly by virtue of a feature which I think is new in pictorial biographies of musicians, namely several full-page colour plates. Most of these are reproductions of paintings by Ida Gerhardt and Jelka Delius, and three of them are studies of the composer. The two by Gerhardt are particularly interesting as I cannot recall having seen them reproduced before. The editors have also hit on the happy notion of selecting the text, wherever possible, from the words of the composer himself.

Unfortunately, however, this last feature has led to problems, for about one-third of the way through I had the uncomfortable feeling that the quotes had got out of hand. (I counted eighteen pages on which the area taken up by illustrations is less than that covered by the printed word: surely this should not be the case in "a life in pictures"?) The other main complaint I have is that peripheral figures have sometimes been allowed to take up more space than they warrant. I do not find it necessary, for instance, to see a picture of W.G. Grace simply because Delius once saw him bowled middle stump! Stravinsky is another whose picture hardly merits inclusion just because Delius once saw Petroushka at Covent Garden and wrote that he was most interested in the music - especially as the inclusion of this pushes a very good one of Delius, Jelka and Ida into a bottom corner of the page. Perhaps I am being greedy, but I find myself wanting much bigger prints of several of the Delius portraits, like the two taken in London at the time of the 1899 Concert. He was at his most dashing handsome then, and the photographs were taken professionally and could easily stand enlargement. There are several other unfamiliar ones which are too small, such as the two taken at the home of Henry and Marie Clews.

I see that a designer is credited with having "significantly contributed" to the joint venture. Perhaps it was he, rather than Messrs. Carley and Threlfall, who was responsible for the annoying superimposition of one photograph upon another at several points? (There is a particularly ghastly example on page 81 where an illustration of the 1923 *Hassan* production has a reproduction of the programme cover across one side of it and a picture of His Majesty's Theatre over the other. This is pointless.)

But I carp too much. It is still a splendid product, and deserves to be second on every member's Christmas present list.

Christopher Redwood.

Footnote: Dawn Redwood's monograph *Flecker and Delius* is now in the press and publication is planned for January 1978.

"HASSAN" AT THE MINACK THEATRE

August 29th - September 2nd 1977.

I have done a lot to further the cause of Delius but I can truthfully boast that in my ten-year association with the Society my support reached its peak of endurance on August Bank Holiday Monday. I sat on a stone - hewn into a rustic seat - facing the wet offshore winds of the Atlantic and listened to Delius's music for *Hassan*. Before I go on to describe the event, I hasten to point out that very few members of the audience departed during the interval, for our interest in the production was greater than our concern over the weather.

Hassan was produced by Jean Howell, who directed the Neptune Players of Bristol in an accurate and imaginative rendering of the play. Miss Howell used the complex and interesting geography of the acting area to the full. For readers who are unfamiliar with Minack, I must explain that it is an open-air theatre, fashioned high-up in the bleak Cornish cliff face and situated about nine miles from Penzance. The site was first used in 1932, and it has undergone vast improvements since then under the guidance of its founder, Miss Rowena Cade, now aged 84. She was present to watch a very good audience gather under a grey sky on the day in question; she was suitably attired in oilskins and wellies and sitting on her upturned wheelbarrow, and was heard to remark that the weather was "not all that bad".

Miss Howell's company numbered a united fifty at a quick count, and to produce a play like *Hassan* at an open-air theatre, two hundred miles from home, with just two days to set the stage was no mean undertaking. There is no controlling the elements, as the company

found out, for their only dress rehearsal took place under a calm, moonlit Cornish sky, while the first night saw them contending with a wind which tested the stitching on drapes and strings on doors, and chalk-marks for scenery were washed away by the rain. The lighting equipment is limited, but only one spot (for Selim on Yasmin's balcony) failed to come up to standard. At the extreme ends of my admiration for the production, the Caliph was superb, but I did not agree with the way Pervaneh or the Fountain Ghost had interpreted their rôles. Both were too dramatic, too forceful, and Pervaneh was not proudly innocent in her decision. The Fountain Ghost did not seem sufficiently resigned to her hopeless outlook on life and death. The Procession of Protracted Death was dealt with swiftly but at too close a proximity to the audience, (through no fault of the producer) thus, I felt, losing the horrific impact it should have had. However, it would not have been feasible to have the cast walking up and down steps in the dark whilst carrying their torture implements, even though the effect might have been greater.

The Beecham recording of the music was astutely edited and played

to give the maximum effect, both for the audience and players. My only hope on leaving the theatre was that the company had the fine weather their efforts deserved for the subsequent six performances.

Footnote: Raymond Raikes, who produced the play on BBC radio so successfully four years ago, and who is a member of the Society, assures me that the hero's name should be pronounced with the stress on the first syllable and both 'a's sounded short. The way most people pronounce it, with a long, accented 'a' on the second syllable means something not quite nice!

Dawn Redwood.

Forthcoming Events

6th November

Balfour Gardiner Centenary Concert at St. John's, Smith Square, including music by Delius, Balfour Gardiner, Grainger, Quilter, Holst etc.

12th November at 7.30 p.m. at Uppingham School,

13th November at 2.45 p.m. at Oxford Chamber Music Society, Maison Francaix: 'Cello recitals by Julian Lloyd Webber which include the Delius Sonata.

17th November at 7.30 p.m.

Yehudi Menuhin and Eric Fenby play Delius's 3rd Violin Sonata at the Wigmore Hall.

Song recital at the Purcell Room by Carole Rosen with Paul Hamburger: *Delius and his Contemporaries*. Members holding tickets will, by identifying themselves to staff on duty, be admitted to the *Young Delius* exhibition in the Festival Hall foyer from 6 p.m.

On this evening also Eric Fenby and Yehudi Menuhin play the 3rd Violin Sonata at the Wigmore Hall; and Leslie Head conducts *Appalachia* at St. John's, Smith Square.

18th November at 7.30 p.m.

Delius Society meeting at Holborn Public Libraries, Theobalds Road, WC1. Robert Threlfall presents an illustrated introduction to *The Magic Fountain*. PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE.

20th November

Broadcast of *The Magic Fountain*, conducted by Norman del Mar.

29th November at 7.30 p.m.

Brent Youth Symphony Orchestra concert at Brent Town Hall, conducted by John East. *La Calinda*, *Irmelin Prelude*, *Froissart Overture*, Walton's 'Cello Concerto and Beethoven's 1st Symphony. Tickets £1.50, £1 and 60p; Children and OAPs half-price. Box Office: 904 6286. Nearest station: Wembley Park.

12th December at 7.45 p.m.

Balfour Gardiner centenary concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, introduced by Eric Fenby. Programme will include music by Gardiner, Bax and the first public performance of Delius's *Paris* arranged for two pianos by Julius Butts, edited by Fenby. Delius Society members holding tickets for this concert will be admitted to the *Young Delius* exhibition in the Festival Hall foyer from 6 p.m. by identifying themselves to the staff on duty.

25th January at 7.30 p.m.

Delius Society Meeting at Holborn Public Libraries, Theobalds Road, WC1. "Scandal in Christiania: the première of *Folkeraadet*": talk with slides and musical illustrations by Lionel Carley.

27th January at 7.30 p.m.

The Fitzwilliam String Quartet play the Delius Quartet in the Small Hall of the University of Bradford. Tickets 75p.

23rd February, 1978 at 7.30 p.m.

Delius Society meeting at the British Music Information Centre, 10 Stratford Place (off Oxford Street). Roland Gibson talks on Delius in his historical setting, and also reminisces on the founding of the Delius Society.

19th April, 1978

A Mass of Life at the Royal Festival Hall conducted by Sir Charles Groves.

Late April, 1978

It is planned to hold a "Delius weekend" at an hotel, probably in the Cotswold area. This will be open to all members, and will include a Society meeting at which all are welcome, whether staying at the hotel or not. Full details will be given in our next issue.

It is understood that the Welsh National Opera Company is planning to include *A Village Romeo and Juliet* in its 1979 season. Further information will be announced when it is available.

